

Statement on Problem Gambling Awareness Month

The Governor has declared March 2014 as Problem Gambling Awareness Month. The Racing Commission fully supports this effort to increase awareness regarding problem gambling.

In late 2013, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders moved gambling from an impulse control disorder to a behavioral addiction classification. Numerous studies confirm that 30% of individuals with drug and alcohol problems also have gambling problems. Gambling has long been thought of as an invisible addiction. There are no track marks or odors or outwardly manifested signs. There also is still a great stigma about problem gambling. It is often seen as lack of willpower or moral failure, and only 9% of people with gambling disorders ever seek help. Problem gambling has profound impact on the individual, the family and the community. It is correlated with divorce, bankruptcy, domestic violence, depression, substance abuse and suicide.

The Commission has been quite active over time in helping to educate the betting public regarding the dangers of compulsive wagering. With cooperation from our racetracks, off-track wagering facilities and Account Wagering System, continuous reference to potential problem gambling symptoms and places to go for help have been advertised at these facilities, on their web sites and in Racing Programs.

One of the more important tools that the Commission has implemented to assist individuals with their gambling problem is the Self-Exclusion List. Established by statute in 2004, this allows an individual to voluntarily exclude him or herself from the premises of all locations where pari-mutual wagering exists as well as from the Account Wagering System. To date, about 92 people have made application to be placed on this confidential list.

Applications are taken at Monmouth Park, Freehold Raceway and Meadowlands Racetrack during regular business hours as well as at the Commission's Trenton Office. In addition, applications may be mailed to Trenton office.

Last year we have agreed to partner with our fellow gaming regulator, the Gaming Commission, to cross accept applications for each agency's self exclusion list. This year, we have agreed to cross accept self-exclusion applications for online casino gambling sites. This provides individuals the opportunity to complete applications for casino self exclusion at locations in Central and Northern New Jersey and provides the Racing Commission a location in South Jersey for individuals to complete its self exclusion list application.

The Racing Commission's Backstretch Community Assistance Program has been helping racing licensees with their compulsive gambling problems for decades. An on-site counselor is available to provide problem gamblers with educational materials and referrals to treatment programs.

The horse racing industry has also given financial support to Problem Gambling programs. To date, Racing has contributed \$2.2 million for prevention, education and treatment programs.

We will continue to support these much needed programs and applaud the efforts of those dedicated to prevention and treatment of this officially recognized addiction. For the last year, Commission staff has been part of a focus group that includes all the State's gaming regulators with the intent to develop programs and priorities for awareness and treatment of compulsive gambling disorders.